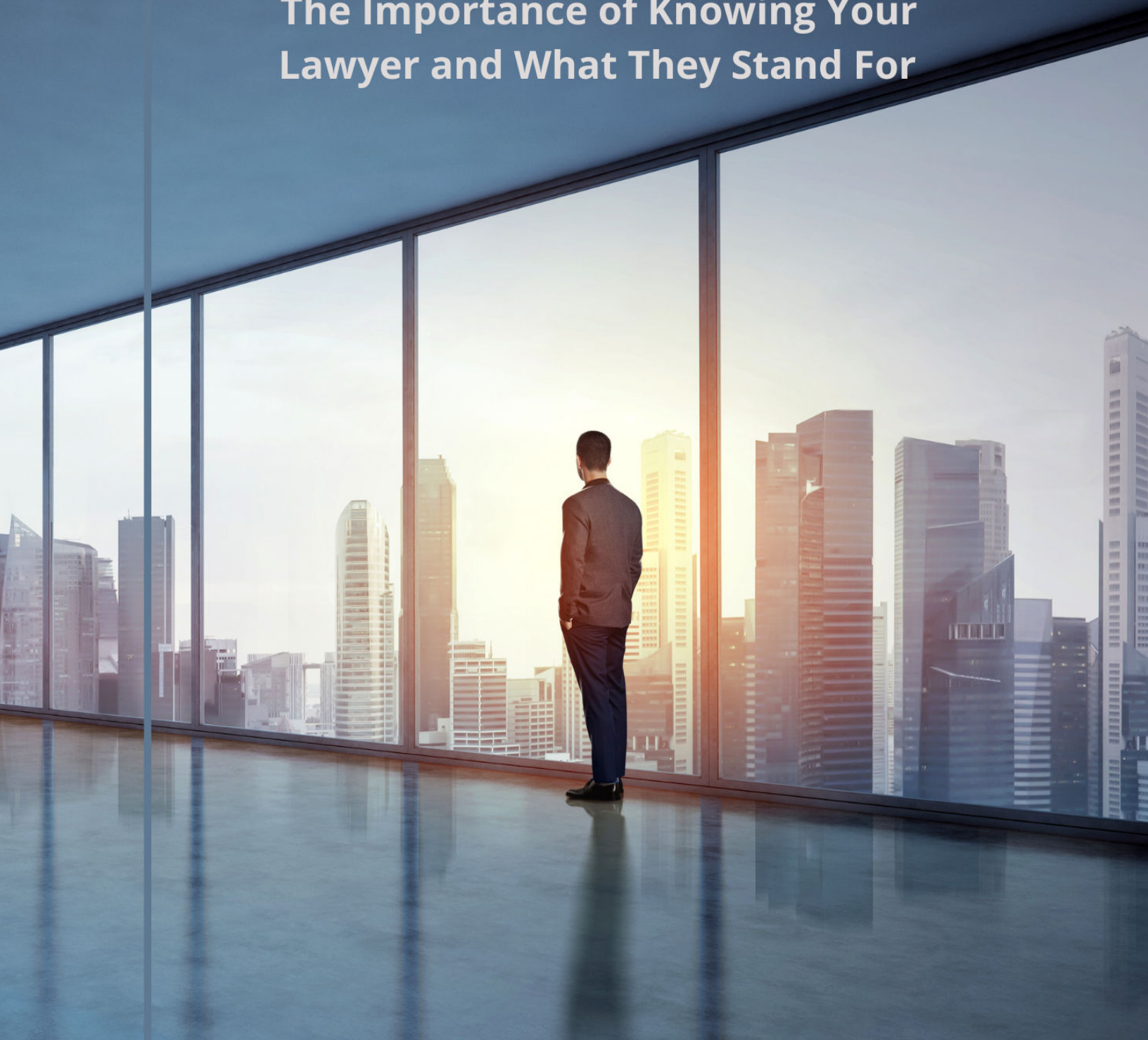


# WHO & WHY

The Importance of Knowing Your  
Lawyer and What They Stand For



Thomas Tona, Esq. & James P. Joseph, Esq.

# **Who and Why**

**The importance of knowing your  
lawyer and what they stand for with  
Thomas Tona, Esq. and James P.  
Joseph, Esq.**

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## About Thomas Tona and TonaLaw

My name is Thomas Tona. I am the owner of TonaLaw. We are a Long Island-based law firm serving three different but related New York markets: personal injury, no-fault collection, and contract litigation. Each of these silos has dedicated lawyers and paraprofessionals serving clients at the highest levels.

First and foremost, we are a personal injury law firm. At the heart of what I do and why I do it is my desire to “Fight for Right.” This is my calling. This is my firm’s calling. My law firm has been fighting insurance companies since 2001. We will fight for the injured as long as we are in business.

Second, we are a no-fault collection law firm. We represent hundreds of healthcare providers and individuals that have been wrongly denied their medical claim payments, lost wages, and other financial benefits they are legally entitled to after a car accident. For insurance carriers, denials aren’t personal. It’s their business model. For our clients and my team, these denials *are* personal. And we fight them as such. It is our calling, again, to “Fight for Right.” We make the carriers pay our clients through litigation and arbitration.

Last but not least, we are a contract litigation law firm. In an age where promises are too easily broken, we fight to hold parties to their agreed-upon promises.

For my firm, it’s about fighting for what is right.

## The Lead Counsel Podcast

The Lead Counsel podcast was borne from conversations with my 25-year-old then Marketing Assistant [Juliet Accomando](#). Juliet has been with TonaLaw for over five years. She has since been promoted to Marketing Coordinator.

Juliet proposed creating a podcast that mirrored our everyday conversations. She suggested that we include conversations with high achievers in law or related fields who have achieved financial success and are also unique in other ways.

One of our criteria for podcast guests is a high level of success. What constitutes a high level of success is defined in many ways. For the purposes of this podcast, we wish to feature guests with extreme self-actualization, emotional intelligence, and a wealth of attributes other than solely materially-defined success.

## Introduction

This ebook comes from our Lead Counsel podcast episode, “Dominating the Field of Matrimonial Law Using Emotional Intelligence.” In this episode, we feature James P. Joseph, a matrimonial lawyer. We discuss what makes James and his team at Joseph Law Group, P.C., unique in their chosen field of matrimonial law.

With 30-plus years of friendship, James and I share a deep connection. He was one of the first people I had in mind to have on the podcast as a guest.

If you read this ebook, I hope you take away the following:

- Choosing the right lawyer and law firm in any case is critical.
- The right lawyer and law firm will leave you better for that experience.
- You can go through divorce (or another legal issue) and come out better on the other side if you choose the right lawyer or law firm.

As a client, the key is feeling like you not only know who is representing you, but you also understand why they do the work they do and what they stand for as an attorney or firm.

The guests I have on the Lead Counsel podcast all believe that what they do is a calling. I believe that this reason goes beyond all others. James P. Joseph is no different. It’s the reason I have been confident in referring people to James and his team for divorce and custody matters for the past three decades.

## Guest Background

James P. Joseph is a matrimonial lawyer who battled and overcame leukemia early in his career while building a wildly successful and highly regarded law firm, Joseph Law Group, P.C.

Joseph Law Group, P.C. focuses on matrimonial and family law, prioritizing emotional intelligence and the well-being of their clients to help obtain favorable resolutions, whether through negotiation or litigation. The firm values efficiency, client-focused service, and integrity. Every team member, be it support staff, new lawyers, or highly experienced lawyers, shares the same vision and values, ensuring their clients receive great representation at a fair and reasonable cost. The firm's unique approach not only helps obtain positive outcomes but also focuses on helping parties move forward more healthily, finding happiness and a better life, and challenging the negative perception of lawyers.

The firm encourages clients to seek therapy alongside legal guidance to effectively manage the emotional and financial aspects of divorce. They encourage clients to set therapy goals early, trust their therapists, and not let minor issues escalate into costly legal battles.

James emphasizes the importance of recognizing that while law is a profession, a law firm is a business, and only by running the business optimally can lawyers practice at their best. As such, the firm's core values include honesty, coaching, and personal and professional growth for all its team members. Joseph Law Group's innovative approach to law practice, influenced by years of coaching and prioritizing work-life balance, challenges traditional norms and sets James and his team apart in his field. James and the members of his firm practice gratitude daily, recognizing the abundance in their lives.

The attorneys at the firm have extensive experience, offer personalized service, and stay up-to-date with new and evolving legal developments. The team understands the profound financial implications of a divorce and always keeps sight of what is in the client's best interest.

The day we recorded the podcast was a special day for James. Sixteen years to the day we recorded, he underwent a stem cell transplant while battling leukemia. This challenging



journey, which coincided with his wife's pregnancy, tested his resilience. James emerged victorious, defying the odds and avoiding lifelong side effects.

James' experience and battle with cancer serve as an inspiration to others. He has since raised well over one million dollars to help in the fight against blood cancers and has privately counseled numerous blood cancer patients.

Today, we celebrate James' triumph over adversity and his commitment to helping others navigate one of life's most challenging events.

## **Matrimonial and Family Law Practice**

Often, personal experiences and professional growth shape one's career path. For some, like James, early exposure to this field provided valuable insights into its complexities and challenges.

James' approach to matrimonial and family practice is different from other firms. While some divorce lawyers adopt an openly aggressive approach, hoping that weak adversaries cower, James and his law firm prioritize emotional intelligence and a calm demeanor. His firm is unwavering in its commitment to obtaining the best results reasonably possible for clients. They understand that the long-term well-being of their clients, especially those with children, should be the ultimate goal. The firm works towards diffusing conflicts, thereby allowing clients to make sound legal decisions. This process helps clients navigate the divorce process with less stress and ultimately emerge as better individuals.

Matrimonial and family law are highly personal issues, and conflicts in these areas often strike at the core of what people find most important. Choosing a firm that cares about you as an individual and not simply your legal issues is essential. A law that understands family

law's complexities and works to help clients heal, like Joseph Law Group, is an investment in a brighter future.

## **Importance of Therapy in Matrimonial Cases**

Divorce is undoubtedly stressful and can bring up many emotional issues in even the most straightforward cases. A crucial part of James' holistic approach to helping individuals navigate the emotional challenges of divorce is encouraging clients to seek psychological therapy. It is often the first step he recommends to new clients. Therapy with a professional offers a healthy space for individuals to process their emotions, gain insights, and develop coping strategies for what may prove to be an emotionally difficult process.

Attorneys can provide valuable advice. However, their expertise and training lie in handling legal matters rather than giving intensive emotional support. Clients are often better equipped to handle the emotional turmoil of divorce when they obtain therapy. Plus, when a client works with a therapist to help process the emotional issues that arise in a divorce, the attorney can focus on what they do best—practicing law to benefit the client.

Therapy is often more cost-effective for clients than relying solely on conversations with their attorneys. The hourly rates of lawyers typically cost significantly more than that of therapists. Plus, sometimes, a client's health insurance covers some or all of the costs of therapy. Processing issues with a therapist allows clients to use the time with their lawyers more efficiently and is more cost-effective.

James views the above benefits as a win-win. Unfortunately, many other lawyers do not seem interested in finding emotional support for a client or reducing the client's legal fees.

Individuals may achieve better outcomes and effectively manage divorce's emotional and financial implications by prioritizing therapy alongside legal representation.

## **Cost-Effective and Emotionally Intelligent Approach to Divorce Law**

Cost-effective legal representation is crucial in ensuring positive outcomes for clients. Some divorce lawyers may focus on maximizing billable hours for their benefit. However, such practices are counterproductive. Focusing on billable hours or maximizing costs rather than a client's best interests breeds client dissent and can add additional financial stressors to a client's life during an already difficult time.

Additionally, lawyers should focus on an emotionally intelligent approach in their cases. This means that the lawyer is not only interested in getting a specific outcome in a case, but they are also concerned with how their behavior impacts others, particularly the client. Divorce lawyers prioritizing fighting, yelling, and screaming fail to realize its negative impact on cases, clients, and any involved children. This misguided approach can result in unnecessarily prolonged and costly legal proceedings. Tragically, people's lives are all too often negatively impacted by this approach.

Using emotional intelligence and being cost-aware in representation are critical elements in a client-focused approach to practicing law. By adopting a client-focused approach, attorneys can resolve cases promptly, protecting their clients' interests and achieving favorable outcomes.

## **Building and Maintaining a Values-Based Firm Culture**

In law firms, it's easy to get caught up in pursuing profit and success. However, some choose a different path, like the lawyers at Joseph Law Group. They are not just another law firm

focused on making money; they are committed to their vision—a law firm that prioritizes their core values and puts clients first. They recognize that litigation's emotional, financial, and time costs must be considered when deciding on legal strategy and goals.

James and his firm, Joseph Law Group, stand out in a field where such qualities are rare. Their commitment to building a culture replicating their core values sets them apart. They are not simply selling legal services but guiding their clients toward a better future. The positive reviews they receive from clients testify to their positive impact on people's lives.

James and his law firm's philosophy can be summed up as always doing what is in the client's best interests. It is with this philosophy that he hopes to offer clients a new beginning.

Because of the focus on emotional intelligence and client-centered representation, the lawyers at Joseph Law Group always take the high road. In a field where it is easy to go ugly and stay ugly, you want a law firm like Joseph Law Group to represent you.

## **Expanding the Firm to Make a Positive Impact**

Joseph Law Group's vision is to expand its reach to positively impact more New Yorkers and help them avoid creating unnecessary damage to themselves and their children. As the law firm's leader, James has set a goal to ultimately have 15 lawyers while maintaining their core values and standards. To this end, James employs a controlled expansion strategy to ensure that every added team member shares the vision and values of the firm. Expanding in this manner may take some time, but he feels it is a goal worthy of pursuing, and he has established a firm built on a solid foundation to do so.

He wants to attract emotionally intelligent, values-focused, and legally skilled attorneys to the firm. He wants attorneys who understand that every major case decision involves a cost-benefit analysis, and lawyers must weigh all the costs to the client, financial and emotional. James espouses a core belief that regardless of the client's income or net worth, dragging them through unnecessary litigation inconsistent with their goals is unacceptable. Many divorce law firms seem to do the opposite, which is, in my opinion, adverse to the client's best interests.

### **Client-Centered Divorce Practice**

In divorce law, James' approach is unique. It goes beyond simply litigating cases. James' approach focuses on improving people's lives and allowing them to find future peace, satisfaction, and happiness. It involves pushing clients toward therapy and counseling and recognizing the importance of mental well-being during and after divorce.

People often have a negative perception of lawyers in general. Clients may think of lawyers as "tough" and ego-driven individuals. James' approach seeks to change this perception by providing compassionate, comprehensive, and understanding legal services. He's worked to challenge the selfish, ego-driven lawyer image by prioritizing the client's best interests at every turn.

While most law firms solely focus on ending a marriage, James and his team focus on helping to create a fresh start for their clients. They strive to give every client a new lease on life. This includes working to positively impact the client, their family, and even their ex-spouse. By offering a chance for a fresh start and a better life, James' approach plays a small but significant role in improving people's lives.

## Importance of Business Management in Law Firms

Efficiently managing the finances of a law firm is crucial for its success. James shares how he first learned the importance of financial well-being in running a firm effectively to provide the best service to every client. He and I both learned, early in our careers, financial well-being is critical to running a firm.

Poorly managed law firms are everywhere. Lawyers are not taught how to run businesses in law school. Lawyers and firms often find themselves overwhelmed and burdened by heavy debt. This can lead to a higher incidence of depression, suicide, fraud, increased and unnecessary litigation costs, and other bad stuff, ultimately negatively impacting the clients.

Many lawyers and law firms struggle financially. This financial strain contributes to the prevalence of ugly litigation in divorces. If a lawyer feels financial pressure, the lawyer may be more litigious to run up legal fees. Lawyers must understand the importance of managing their firm's finances to provide better client services and avoid unnecessary legal battles.

In legal matters, it is crucial to adopt a business-like approach to ensure optimal outcomes. The focus should be on serving clients' best interests rather than being driven by financial concerns. Unfortunately, some attorneys prioritize making payroll over providing quality representation. This mindset can lead to unnecessary litigation and exorbitant fees, which can be detrimental to individuals involved in divorce cases. While complex situations may warrant higher costs, expenses incurred are often wasteful and avoidable. Legal professionals must prioritize reasonableness and rationality and adhere to the law and the code of ethics. Doing so can alleviate unnecessary financial burdens, and attorneys can minimize the damaging effects of divorce litigation.

## Signs of a Poorly-Managed Firm

Clients should peek under the hood of the law firm they are considering for their divorce.

Clients should reflect on the following questions when selecting a lawyer:

- Is the firm well run?
- Does it give you a bad vibe?
- What was unsaid at the interview?

The signs of a law firm's financial stress are often apparent.

Financially unsound attorneys or firms often use the "low retainer to get them in the door" tactic. Attorneys that employ this tactic know the actual costs of divorce litigation but will severely undercut the initial retainer fee to lock clients in with their firm, knowing they will not likely leave. Often, those same firms provide poor service. After all, they don't hire the right staff, or nearly enough staff, because they lack the proper finances. Their primary concern may be making payroll, so they tell clients what they want to hear rather than the truth. Clients often find communicating with these attorneys frustrating, which is never good.

Observing the office environment is another way to determine a poorly managed law firm.

You may reflect on the following:

- Is the office disorganized and sloppy?
- Are there papers everywhere?
- Is the office calm or frenetic?

Clients should think about how they work best. If the conditions of the law firm do not match that, a client may want to look elsewhere for representation.

## **Integrity in Legal Practice**

Integrity is a fundamental core value that guides great decision-making processes at my law firm, TonaLaw, and Joseph Law Group. We define integrity as doing the right thing, being honest, transparent, and acting ethically in all aspects of our work. We prioritize communicating truthful intelligent advice with clients based on what best suits the case, the client, and their family rather than simply telling people what they want to hear.

This approach can be challenging for James and his team. In divorce cases, they deal with sensitive matters such as asset division and child custody. However, their shared belief in being upfront and truthful with their clients, even if it means losing some business, is at their core.

James built his reputation of integrity while handling some of the most challenging cases. Today, his firm only works with clients who are ready to grow and move forward. This way, they can make a positive impact in these cases while ensuring their lawyers have the energy to perform at their best.

## **Professionalism in Legal Practice**

James and I believe that integrity and professionalism are crucial qualities in any professional setting, especially in a law firm. While expressing frustration or using colorful language when dealing with challenging situations may be tempting, attorneys must maintain their composure and professionalism.

Lawyers who engage in yelling or bullying tactics rarely yield positive results. These tactics can often lead to complications and delays. Instead, it is essential to approach frustrating or challenging situations with integrity by treating others with respect and avoiding hostile



behavior. By doing so, legal professionals can build trust, foster effective communication, and ultimately achieve better outcomes in their work.

## **Team Management and Work-Life Balance**

In today's fast-paced and demanding work environment, achieving a healthy work-life balance is crucial. It ensures that employees are well-rested and enhances their overall performance.

Similarly, fostering a teamwork culture is essential for any organization's success. When everyone understands and embraces their role, collaboration becomes seamless, increasing productivity and success.

Lastly, personal growth is a crucial aspect that should be encouraged in the workplace. When individuals are motivated to grow personally and professionally, it benefits them and the firm. Employees become more skilled, confident, and adaptable by investing in their development.

Doing all this creates a positive and thriving work environment where everyone can reach their full potential. Plus, maximizing the wellness of the team maximizes the client experience.

## **The Value of Candor in a Law Firm**

The concept of candor stands out amongst a law firm's core values. Candor is the ability of an attorney to be honest and direct while always maintaining kindness.

This concept, popularized by Gary Vaynerchuk, has resonated with many professionals, including James and myself. It is so crucial to both of us that we have woven the concept of candor into our law firms' core values.

Candor is critical to developing a thriving, trustworthy legal practice. Often, fear prevents lawyers and paralegals from speaking the absolute truth to their clients. However, embracing kind honesty can lead to better outcomes for all parties involved.

### **Transforming a Firm with Legal Management Coaching**

Another powerful tool in personal and professional growth is legal management coaching. James and I have employed management coaching organizations for the past 15-20 years to help us best serve our employees and clients. Utilizing management coaching has transformed our law practices, our lives, and the lives of our clients.

As discussed above, law school does not teach lawyers how to become effective managers. We've both seen how critical it is to develop skills not taught in law school to build law firms of the highest caliber. To this end, we each have invested hundreds of thousands of dollars in this type of coaching.

By doing things others don't, such as seeking constant education and coaching, we achieve results others won't. It's what sets us apart.

### **The Value of Gratitude in a Divorce Practice**

James and I both practice a daily gratitude exercise to start the day with a positive mindset. Practicing gratitude plays a significant role in our lives, shaping our outlooks and perspectives. It is a powerful reminder that each day is a gift, not a given. As we grow older,

we hopefully gain wisdom and recognize that every day is precious. Embracing gratitude enriches our lives and helps us focus on what truly matters.

Gratitude has the power to transform lives in profound ways. As I write this, James just celebrated the 16th anniversary of a life-saving stem cell transplant, a gift that had a lasting and positive impact on him and all of those in his universe. Despite the challenges he has faced, gratitude remains essential in his life. James' daily gratitude practice centers his mindset and reminds him of the abundance in his life.

It's easy to forget our privileges, the roof over our heads, and our easy access to food, clean water, and technology. We must embrace gratitude and appreciate the blessings we often take for granted.

### **The Unique Approach of the Joseph Law Group, P.C.**

One remarkable aspect that sets James and his team apart as divorce attorneys is James's exceptional uniqueness. He is too humble to ever cop to this. But I will do it for him, though he may try to remove this portion of the eBook. (He did twice, but I put it back!)

James' distinctiveness compelled me to invite him to the podcast to share his insights. It has allowed him to build a matrimonial law firm like no other in downstate New York, one of the country's most competitive legal markets.

He has risen to the top by remaining true to his values.

Whether you're a client seeking a divorce lawyer, an attorney looking to refer people to James, or even a direct competitor of James and his firm, within 20 minutes of meeting any Joseph Law Group member, you cannot deny their extraordinary nature. Their willingness

to extend a helping hand to anyone in need is truly magical. This attribute alone holds immense value in the legal profession, making them stand out among their peers.

### **What a Potential Client Needs to Know About Joseph Law Group, P.C.**

When I speak with a client going through a divorce and looking for an attorney, I do not hesitate to send them to Joseph Law Group. I typically highlight the following three concepts when discussing the firm.

First, I emphasize the firm's legal acumen and track record in delivering exceptional services over the past three decades I have known James and his team. I refer clients to James monthly, and they always return with the same report of superior client services. No law firm can guarantee results. However, the Joseph Law Firm does guarantee exceptional service. James and his team deliver that in every single case and every single time.

Secondly, the firm is committed to personalized service and attention to detail. I let potential clients know their needs will be understood and addressed with utmost care.

Lastly, I always emphasize the firm's dedication to staying up-to-date with legal developments and strategies. His firm also has an impressive track record of excellent results.

Knowing James as I do, I can easily assure potential clients that the Joseph Law Group has the experience, knowledge, and skills to navigate even the most complex legal matters effectively and efficiently.

## Tips for Clients Going Through a Divorce

Many clients want to know what they should do to have an efficient, effective, and less stressful divorce. James and I discussed some tips to help clients minimize the emotional and financial toll of a divorce.

As mentioned above, getting therapy is crucial to achieving the best outcomes in a divorce case. Clients should seek a therapist who can help them clarify and prioritize their goals in their therapy sessions. By emphasizing the importance of setting goals early on, therapists can help clients stay focused and avoid distractions. A therapist can help clients find balance and prioritize what is most important. This will prevent minor issues from escalating into costly legal battles.

Clients are encouraged to trust their therapists as part of a supportive team. They should feel free to ask their therapist questions and seek clarification if there's something they don't understand. Trusting a therapist can be challenging, but it is necessary for progress in therapy.

It is also essential that you trust your divorce lawyers. This is why clients must hire divorce attorneys that are of the highest caliber, such as those at Joseph Law Group. James and his team will never, ever break your trust. I say this with complete confidence.

## Conclusion

It is my sincere hope that this ebook brings you value.

Whether you choose my firm, TonaLaw, for your personal injury case or James' firm, Joseph Law Group, for your divorce, hopefully, you now understand how you can come out better for the experience. The legal issues you face may be overwhelming. However, you can select

a knowledgeable and skilled attorney or law firm dedicated to building trust with you, who deeply cares about your life and your legal rights. With dedicated professionals like James or myself on your side, you will hopefully walk away from your stressful legal battle feeling confident and at peace.

If you are interested in TonaLaw or Joseph Law Group, P.C., or would like more information on our firms' values, you can find us at:

[www.tonalaw.com](http://www.tonalaw.com)

[www.josephlawpc.com](http://www.josephlawpc.com)

Also, you can check out the Lead Counsel podcast to hear the full interview episode and others wherever podcasts are distributed.